



# Red Flag

MAY 1998 JOURNAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF AOTEAROA

## SUPPORT THE FIREFIGHTERS

In a move seemingly mimicking the dismissal of the Australian watersiders the Fire Service announced the sacking of New Zealand's entire 1575 professional firefighters on July 1<sup>st</sup>. In their place new jobs would be created in a bid to reduce the minimum crewing levels in fire vehicles from 4 to 3 or two.

The restructuring is a bid to reduce the costs of the Fire Service to insurance companies. The Fire Service budget has been cut from \$180 million in 1993 to \$156 million in 1997. But reduced crews will be dangerous and reduce effectiveness. In the US, reduced crews have been followed by more deaths, injuries and damage. Invercargill firefighters cited an injury to one crew member reducing their strength to three as an example of how three-staff crews could not work.

The dismissals are the latest in a series of attacks on firefighters by the Fire Service under the chairmanship of Roger Estall, a former member of the Council of Insurance Companies. Firefighters have not had a pay rise in eight years.

Estall was appointed on the recommendation of Business Roundtable director Roger Kerr. Even while Fire Service chairman, receiving a \$50,000 salary, Estall continues to be a consultant to insurance broking firm Marsh and McLennan. Alliance MP Grant Dillon claimed in parliament that Estall had advised insurance companies how to avoid Fire Service levies. Fire Service Deputy Chairman Doug Martin confirmed that Marsh and McLennan had broken the law in advising clients how to avoid the levies, but that no prosecution was being contemplated at this stage. Estall show open contempt for his employees. He offered 'psychological counseling' for staff angry at the dismissals.

The attack on the fire fighters is a test by the government to see if it can break some of the determined pockets of worker resistance to privatisation within the public service. Similar plans have been rumoured to be in store for police and secondary teachers and certainly the government is demonstrating a much more interventionist approach to these contract struggles.

The Maritime Union in Australia has shown that workers united can defeat such frontal attacks by the capitalist class. The parallels between the firefighters and the maritime workers' fights are many. The sackings were announced suddenly. The employer, Roger Estall is as uncharismatic and confrontational as Patrick's Corrigan and is up to his ears in corruption. The government minister, Jack Elder, is as stupid and unpopular as Australian Industrial Relations Minister Reith.

New Zealand's repressive industrial laws, limit the ability of unions to seek redress in court so little reliance should be given to this tactic. But determined, united strike action and community supported picket lines at fire stations could seriously effect the ability of the fire service to combat fires at commercial premises.

# SHIPLEY-PETERS GANG: PUTTING THE BOOT IN

As widely expected, the Shipley-Peters gang used the Budget to launch a populist witch-hunt on beneficiaries as a smokescreen for a renewed wave of privatisations. Amidst the capitalist crisis in Asia and at home the government is seeking to maintain capitalist profitability by making it easier to pay low wages and reducing taxes on the rich.

Workers wages are constrained by propaganda attacks on beneficiaries to lower expectations and seek out a pittance rather than seek support from the government. Labour laws are being amended to make it even easier to sack workers. Low paid workers are to face pressure to accept lower wages from the competition from forced labour on the work-for-the-dole scheme. Tariff reductions will throw more workers out of work, increasing competition for jobs, and making workers more willing to accept reduced wages and conditions.

The attacks on beneficiaries are aimed to reduce or at least check state spending on benefits, making it possible to reduce taxes on the rich without leading to a budget deficit. But the greatest cuts to state spending will come if the government can get rid of more parts of its operations through privatisation. The main target is to make some inroads into the biggest areas of government spending health and education, but anything will do.

## **Beneficiary Bashing**

The \$1 million Code of Social Responsibility "discussion paper" circulated to all households and an intensive \$1.5 million advertising campaign by Income Support supposedly against benefit fraud, are designed to isolate and stigmatise beneficiaries as parasites on the backs of working people.

"This year's Budget is the culmination of the Government's propaganda campaign waged against the most vulnerable members of New Zealand society", said Richard Davis, Research Executive officer of the Joint Methodist-Presbyterian Public Questions Committee.

The sickness benefit will be cut from \$153 to \$147 per week. Solo parents will be required to work part time once their child turns six and full time once they turn 14. Invalids, widows and sickness beneficiaries will be work-tested. 2/3 of students will lose their entitlement to unemployment assistance when unable to find summer work.

The cuts will further reduce government spending on benefits, which (including superannuation) has already fallen from 14.2% of GDP in 1992 to 12.8% in 1996.

The Budget statement also signalled further attacks on workers' rights, particularly in lessening protection from unfair dismissal, Peters announcing that the government will amend the ECA to change the balance "between substance of the employees conduct and the process the employer has followed".

The cuts to benefits and workers will reduce low incomes, while the cuts to the highest tax rates will increase the disposable incomes of the most wealthy. With 268,700 or 30% of the children of Aotearoa living in benefit-dependant families, this will only accentuate the social fragmentation in Aotearoa with flow-on effects for crime and youth suicide. To cope, the government is increasing spending on prisons and mental health, but expects to make a net saving.

Meanwhile the government's so-called "employment" policies are throwing more workers into unemployment, adding to the 220,000 people already jobless and increasing the number of beneficiaries.

Announced tariff cuts will destroy 20,000 jobs in the clothing and 5,000 jobs in the car industry. Since this government was formed unemployment has risen by 18%, 20,000 people have lost their jobs while only 3000 jobs have been created. Further, by the government's own research, for every four people it places on the work-for-the-dole scheme one real job will be lost. Their very policies are directly creating unemployment.

### **Renewed Privatisation Moves**

In place of the coalition's promised allowances for tertiary students, the Shipley-Peters gang has to pull a sleight-of-hand, introducing a so-called "Universal Tertiary Tuition Allowance", actually a device for private business to take over tertiary education.

The "allowance" is a disguised voucher system, removing direct government funding of tertiary institutions, and replacing it with indirect funding via the number of students tertiary institutions can attract. This funding will be available to any provider, public or private, the previous limit on funding private providers removed.

Association of University Staff Executive Director Rob Crozier said these moves were only the start. "We have been warned that the White Paper due out in August will include proposals to disestablish Councils and replace them with Boards of Directors, bring in a capital charge and shift the underlying nature of tertiary education to a business footing."

An even less subtle approach is being used in Secondary Schooling, where the Government has failed to convince schools to switch to the bulk funding formula. It has responded by increasing by \$222 million the bribe to schools which enter bulk funding, while schools which choose to remain centrally resourced will be financially penalised

The deregulation of accident compensation, also paves the way for privatisation of workers' only avenue for injury compensation. The move is designed to cut costs to large employers, while the burden of injury claims will be met by levies on workers and small employers.

### **Desperate Measures**

The Budget will win the Shipley-Peters gang no friends amongst the urban poor, under the crushing weight of government indifference to the increasing burden of poverty for more than a decade. The populist fervour whipped up by Peters in 1996 has long been exhausted.

While attacks on beneficiaries are popular amongst the right wing urban and conservative rural middle class, and some sections of the working class, they are likely to arouse deep hostility the workers and beneficiaries on the receiving end and amongst the liberal middle class.

The code of social responsibility was slammed by large numbers of liberal middle class professionals. Church groups are mobilising against the cuts in an unprecedented manner. The Anglican church is organising its first ever march, in protest at the government's attacks.

Wide public concern remains about planned cuts to hospital services. On 16 May 5,000 people marched through New Plymouth protesting the lack of funding in the Budget to secure local hospitals.

91,000 people remain on surgery waiting lists, while hospitals in places like Kaitaia, Whakatane, Gisborne, Wanganui, Masterton, Blenheim, Greymouth and Ashburton face the axe from plans to remove surgery. A recent survey by the Coalition for Public Health found that per capita nursing numbers had fallen a fifth since 1990. In 1990 there were 516 full-time equivalent nurses for every 100,000 New Zealanders. By December 1997, the ratio had fallen 18 percent to 424 nurses for every 100,000 people.

Support for New Zealand First has evaporated in public opinion polls, while support for the National Party has slumped from 46% to 41%. 73% disapprove of the coalition government. Public disenchantment is polarising between the neo-liberal ACT party and the left social democrat Alliance, up to 9% and 8% respectively.

Despite its bulldog appearance, the Shipley-Peters gang is shaky, and determined mobilisations of the working class and urban poor in alliance with the liberal middle class can shake it down.

## Kotahitanga Hikoi Against MAI

**A Hikoi against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment from April 13 and May 5 took the campaign against foreign control of Aotearoa to towns and communities from Te Hapua to Poneke.**

**Led by Saana Murray, a respected kuia in her seventies** from Ngaati Kuri in the far North, the hikoi saw around 40 of her whaanau and supporters walking the length of the North Island. When they attempted to cross the Auckland Harbour Bridge, in the footsteps of the great land march of 1975, 24 participants were arrested, including a 14 year old boy. Rallies were held in support in towns on the route.

Murray is one of the principal claimants to the Waitangi Tribunal on the question of the commodification of taonga maaori as intellectual property rights. Under the MAI proposals, these seem destined to be defined and controlled globally, rather than by the Hapuu and Iwi to whom kaitiakitanga or even 'ownership', more justly belongs.

While the Hikoi was launched at the time that the Government was publicly backing away from signing the MAI, it aimed to highlight the long-term attack on self-determination being mobilised by multinationals.

While the Hikoi targeted MAI, the main demand was for a strengthening of Maori rights to Self Determination against government complicity in selling out indigenous resources, calling on Maori to assert their tino rangatiratanga and reclaim the treaty settlement process. Demands included sacking the Waitangi Fisheries Commission and a suspension of treaty settlements until constitutional changes had secured tino rangatiratanga. The marches emphasised the strategic role the Treaty could play in defending the rights of all oppressed peoples in Aotearoa.

## Takaparawha: The Relaunch of Tino Rangatiratanga

On May 25 1978, 600 police officers, supported by the Army, stormed onto Bastion Point above Auckland's exclusive Tamaki Drive, and began evicting the Maori owners living on their land. 220 people were arrested in a major turning point for the Maori movement for self determination.



The march passes through Auckland.  
Photo by Robert Jones.

'Bastion Point', Takaparawha, and much of Auckland was Ngati Whatua land at the time of English colonisation. Ngati Whatua chief, Apihai Te Kawau, came under immense pressure from the government last century to sell land as Auckland city expanded. Much Ngati Whatua land was sold to the Crown, but before his death Te Kawau secured the 280ha acres at Takaparawha enshrined in law in perpetuity for his people.

Despite this protective legislation however, successive governments seized increasing amounts of Takaparawha under various guises, such as defence purposes and public reserves. In 1951 the tribe was evicted from its tribal centre papakainga on the Okahu Bay foreshore and relocated into state houses in Orakei.

The dispute simmered in, courts, appeals to government and public appeals with little progress until Wellington builder, and Ngati Whatua son, Joe Hawke in 1977 led a small group back to Takaparawha to reoccupy their land.

The occupiers erected make-shift housing for many of the tribe who began to come home, beginning a 506 day stay. The occupation was long and hard on its members. Nine year old Joann Hawke, niece of the occupation leader, died in a tragic fire in one of the huts.

But, following the Maori land march of 1975 which had highlighted the breadth of Maori concern about their oppression and the alienation of their lands, the Ngati Whatua stand at Takaparawha acted as a catalyst for action, and an example for others to voice their grievances.

And the forceful response of the government to a challenge from below, awoke many pakeha throughout Aotearoa to the realities of state violence and ruling class interests. When police forcibly removed the Ngati Whatua again from their lands, and bulldozed down their houses, the government lost the dispute. Although it took another ten years of legal challenges, the weight of public opinion had moved decisively. Bourgeois property rights were turned back in the faces of the settler ruling class, in 1988 the land was returned, and a precedent set for a wave of Maori land claims.

## **Capitalist Overproduction in Asia Brings Revolution**

The Suharto/Habibie quick-change in Indonesia under the weight of mounting protests is symptomatic of the profound upheaval sweeping Asia as the world capitalist system enters unprecedentedly grave crisis.

The global centres of capitalism themselves are being shaken by the contradiction between the overaccumulation of finance and productive capital in the hands of the monopoly bourgeoisie on the one hand and the rising levels of unemployment and deterioration of wage conditions among the proletariat on the other.

Worldwide, the forces of production have rapidly grown to an immense scale on the basis of advanced technology and a well-educated work force and is crucially interdependent on a world scale. Yet the avaricious character of private monopoly appropriation knows no bounds. The drive of the monopolies to accumulate and concentrate constant capital and cut down variable capital for wages is reducing the market in all types of goods and generating one crisis of overproduction after the other, resulting in the financial strangulation of the proletariat and people and all the countries under imperialist domination.

The few economies which were touted as new emergent markets have collapsed. They were artificially turned into areas yielding the highest rates of profit through the heavy infusion of speculative capital to finance upper class consumption, bureaucrat operations, privatization, real estate speculation and so on. The overproduction of goods in export-oriented manufacturing proved fatal. In the end, the mounting trade deficits and debt burden turned the so-called Asian miracle into a catastrophe, taking the form of currency and stockmarket meltdowns.

For the international bankers the great fear is that the affected countries – at this stage Thailand, South Korea, Indonesia, the Philippines might simply default on their foreign debts. The "rescue" programs hurried forward by the IMF and the major lending powers are designed not so much to prop up the ailing economies as to guarantee that the western financial institutions get their capital and interest back, through providing new "bail-out" funds (\$57 billion for South Korea alone) which of course pile on further debts for the future.

These crises devastate the productive forces, and throw millions into poverty. The devastation of the productive forces become far more rapid under the neoliberal economic policy than under its Keynesian predecessor. The myth of the global "free market" has become totally discredited in so short a time

The imperialist countries are increasingly in cutthroat competition. The United States is relatively in the best economic position only at the expense of Japan and the European Union. But all of them are on a stagnant course, with overall falling rates of growth and profitability.

The entire monopoly bourgeoisie has the illusion that it can solve its problems by accelerating the privatization of public assets, deregulation against public interest and trade and investment liberalization. It has run amuck in trying to dismantle the social measures and social pretenses of its own state and to blame the proletariat for the ravages of the system of monopoly capitalism.

But the shrinkage of the domestic and foreign markets drive the imperialist powers to compete against each other, despite the interweaving combinations of monopoly interests through multinational firms and banks. The greatest shrinkage of the market has occurred in the overwhelming majority of countries which have remained dependent on raw-material production for export. They have been stricken with the crisis of overproduction in this line of production since the '70s. They have been crushed by the deteriorating terms of trade and foreign debt and forced to go into austerity and abject misery. Now they are being joined by the Asian "Tigers"

The ranks of countries suffering from third world conditions of agrarian backwardness have expanded. Social unrest and turmoil have spread and intensified on an unprecedentedly wide scale. The reactionary puppets in the neocolonial client-states are dumbfounded by the collapse of their 'economic miracles' and the millions demonstrating on the streets. Anti-imperialist and class struggles are resurgent. The global conditions for revolution are favorable

## **Imperialists Pick over the Bones of Asian Economies**

In the wake of the massive crisis of plunging share prices and currency values that has sent so-called "tiger" economies into whimpering collapse, the big US and European transnational companies are moving in to pick up their stricken industries at bargain basement rates.

The Asian capitalists are being made to pay a heavy price for assistance to meet their debt payments, to agree to demands formulated by that chief arm-twister, the IMF. The price is literally to hand over their economies to the western banks and transnationals.

In December the former U.S. Commerce Secretary, Mickey Kantor, told a gathering in London of the Confederation of British Industry that when countries seek help from the IMF the U.S. and Europe should use the IMF as a battering ram to gain advantages and that the troubles of the "tiger" economies should be seized upon as a golden opportunity to reassert U.S. and commercial interest.

South Korea is compelled to open its capital market and financial system in general to foreign banks and investors who are allowed to participate in mergers and acquisitions of financial institutions (meaning a full-scale takeover mainly by U.S. banks). Restrictions on foreign ownership of companies are removed, with foreigners allowed to have 55 percent ownership at first, total control later. Trade barriers are lifted,

enabling freer entry of competitive foreign products. The usual IMF terms of drastic cuts in public spending, higher taxes and interest rates, elimination of liberal labor laws, and others must be introduced.

It is the takeover of South Korean businesses that will be most devastating for that country's developing national economy. The European Credit Lyonnais Securities reports that only 87 of listed South Korean companies out of a total of 653 non-financial firms are sufficiently solvent to be safe from foreign predators. These had moved in when the bail-out deal signatures were hardly dry.

The steep devaluation of the South Korean won that is a feature of the crisis has made all such companies vulnerable and fire-sale cheap. As the London Times' leading analyst on international finance, Daniel Bush, put it: "The pact that Asian governments have made with the IMF is positively Faustian. They get billions of dollars in the short term but lose control of their destinies. The 'tigers' will emerge from the current crisis declawed and owned by the west."

Above all the worst effects of the crisis are to be borne by South Korea's workers. The western "rescuers" frankly admit that their "reforms" will result in at least one million unemployed. One of the demands of the IMF and the transnationals is for abolishing worker job security by throwing out the labor law, won by hard struggles in the past, that provides virtual life-time protection from arbitrary firing. The U.S. transnationals moving in for company takeovers want freedom to sack workers for any reason.

The independent 550,000-member Korean Confederation of trade Unions (to be distinguished from the government-backed Federation of Korean Trade Unions) strongly opposes any change in the labor laws, its leader Kwan Young-kie pledging a repeat of the strikes and demonstrations that defeated a similar attempt by the previous right-wing government last year, and calling for public hearings to fix blame for the present economic crisis and to punish those responsible.

If the step is taken toward demolishing job security to serve the transnationals the fight of the militant KCTU is likely to acquire an anti-imperialist character that could have its echo elsewhere in an Asia being taken over by western bankers and big business.

*Peoples Weekly World*

## **FLETCHER CANADA STRIKE ENDS**

After nine months on the picket lines, 2,400 west coast pulp and paper workers have voted 59% to accept a new collective agreement with Fletcher Challenge Canada (FCC). The deal will set the pattern for upcoming bargaining with other employers in the industry.

The agreement was reached on April 14, after two days of meetings between the company and the two unions involved, the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers (CEP) and the Pulp, Paper and Woodworkers of Canada (PPWC), with Vince Ready acting as mediator.

The unions had been widely criticised in the corporate media for their "unrealistic" refusal to accept Fletcher Challenge's demands; the same media claimed that the agreement was virtually the same as one rejected overwhelmingly two months earlier. But PPWC president Garry Worth said the final deal included some improvements over earlier proposals.

Going into the 1997 negotiations, Worth said, the unions were seeking improvements to job security, benefits and pensions, and wage increases. But the key issue was job creation measures such as shorter work time. In fact, Worth said, he called this "strike for jobs," calling on the industry take advantage of the monies available under the NDP's Jobs and Timber Accord to hire new employees in the forest industry as a result of changed work processes, such as a shorter work week.

The company was demanding full flexibility - the right for management to order any employer to perform any job in the plant - plus 365-day operations and a six year collective agreement.

The flexibility issue is about "more than who screws in a light bulb," said Worth. "It's an issue of who operates a plant with just a one or two page collective agreement. It means eliminating the rights of workers to have any input or to bring grievances."

The striking workers were receiving \$400 weekly strike pay. While this is more than many workers or unemployed live on, agreed Worth, "it's not a big wage" compared to the regular earnings in the industry. Still, he said, the strikers got used to living on this amount, and their fellow members in other locals were quite willing to have their dues increased by \$95 to help generate money for the strike fund.

As the strike went on, however, FCC "came into a lot of cash." Through the sale of its 51% share in Timberwest and a paper mill in Wisconsin, the company earned about \$1 billion. At the same time, Worth said, the market for pulp and paper products "went totally against us." FCC boasted that it could make more money on interest than through operating the three strike-bound mills.

The late January report by mediator Colin Taylor was overwhelmingly rejected, Worth said, largely because it included provisions for a pension clawback which the company had not even asked for in negotiations.

Ready's report eliminated the clawback and included some other changes. "Fletcher Challenge didn't win everything," Worth stresses. "The management rights clause they wanted was ditched, and we did get a task force on apprenticeship and employment in the industry." The agreement expands protection against layoffs while outside contractors are doing work to include all workers (previously it just covered maintenance employees), as well as double time for the Christmas statutory holidays, a \$2,750 signing bonus, 2% wage increases in each of the last five years of the agreement, and some improvement in benefits.

Many PPWC members were "bitterly disappointed that Fletcher Challenge got so much," Worth said. "But no strike can go on forever. You have to reach a conclusion sometime." Now that bargaining is to begin with other employers, he said, "the industry is already complaining that this deal is too expensive!".

*Peoples Voice, Vancouver*

## **Takeover New Zealand**

Despite Douglas Myers' protestations otherwise, the purchase of 45% of Lion Nathan by Japanese Brewing giant, Kirin, is a takeover of one of the last remaining New Zealand owned corporations. Myers and fellow directors sold their personal holdings to Kirin for a Lion's share of the \$1.4 billion purchase. Initially Kirin appoints four of the ten directors, with Myers nominally staying on as chairman in the interim.

Kirin, part of the Mitsubishi group, invested with the aim of expanding its position in China. Lion Nathan has two large breweries there, and Kirin has three. The New Zealand operations, small in world terms, are of little interest.

The Lion purchase came at the same time that the Malaysian owners of Brierley Investments, Camerlin, ended their passive role in the company and forced the dismissal of chairman Bob Matthews and managing director Paul Collins.

Lion Nathan, Brierley Investments and Fletcher Challenge were the three last survivors of the Kiwi corporations who tried to take on the world in the deregulatory days of the 1980s.

On the basis of highly leveraged international borrowing, massive corporations like Chase, Equiticorp, Goodman Fielder, Fay Richwhite appeared out of thin air, buying up small firms here and abroad. Chase for example was a small hobby investment company in 1982, when they secured a \$6 million loan from the Bank of Kuwait to buy Amalgamated Theatres when its owners were distracted. They used the cash flow and property from this to borrow more and buy more. Within three years, with no net real assets, the group had borrowed \$1 billion to buy up much of Auckland's commercial real estate. Fletcher Challenge, Lion Nathan and Brierleys were consolidated through massive takeovers at this time.

The Kiwi corporate world challenge ended with the sharemarket crash in 1987. Companies, like Chase, which had borrowed and invested this money in shares, were no longer able to sell these shares at a profit and meet their debt payments. Bankruptcies spread from the investment companies to the banks. New Zealand's largest bank, the BNZ was brought to its knees and was bailed out by the government, twice. The high-flying New Zealand corporate sector was reduced to a fire sale, and overseas investors stepped in to pick over the ashes.

Since 1989 there has been a rapid increase in foreign investment in Aotearoa, from \$725 million in 1989 to a peak of \$4.7 billion in 1994. This has since fallen back to \$2 billion in 1997 but the total has risen to \$51 billion and New Zealand capitalists now pay out \$7.3 billion a year in profit repatriation and debt repayments to the foreign owners of these investments. This is the major contributor to New Zealand's balance of payments deficit of 7.7% of GDP, higher than Mexico's in 1994 when its currency collapsed. These payments deficits are adding to the \$80 billion total debt clocked up by New Zealand's capitalists, lining New Zealand up for a currency crisis of Asian dimensions.

Successive governments have justified this high level of foreign investment on the grounds that New Zealand capitalists don't have the funds to do it themselves. However the investment rate, that is the ratio of gross fixed capital formation to GDP, actually fell with the foreign investment wave, from 19.2% in 1989 to 16.4% in 1993. Although the rate has subsequently increased, New Zealand's investment rate still remains below the OECD average.

Lion Nathan, Brierleys, Fletcher Challenge, and Carter Holt Harvey attempted to steer a path through the economic difficulties and the world of international finance, maintaining local management control but mobilising capital from overseas through small offerings to a range of dispersed capital markets. The Lion takeover by Kirin, alongside the increased activism by Camerlin in Brierleys points to the end of this attempt. Fletchers now has most of its shareholding on the US stockmarket, and while it may hang on a bit longer, its future is with foreign capital.

These companies are now part of US or Japanese-run large integrated production networks. International Paper, owner of Carter Holt Harvey has forestry operations around the Asia Pacific Region. Kirin operates brewing concerns likewise. NZ forestry is already largely US and Japanese owned. Sooner or later US interests can be expected to make a bid for Fletchers, although the firm has a significant defensive structure. Fishing is Maori-owned, but with significant joint ventures with Korean and Japanese firms.

Consolidation of these networks for transnational interests is top of the agenda for the ongoing APEC talks, scheduled for Auckland in November 1999. In particular, talks are currently focussed on the creation of an Asia-Pacific bloc in forestry and fishing to further rationalise these networks for the US and Japanese multinationals in the region.

Aotearoa's place in the imperialist restructuring of the Asia Pacific region has become a raw materials resource base for imperialist exploitation at lower and lower wages. Under the weight of balance of payments deficits and mounting debt the structures supporting the standard of living of the workers of Aotearoa will continue to be systematically dismantled.

## MAY DAY 1998

"Workers of the World Unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains". 150 years on from Marx and Engels' rallying call in the Communist Manifesto, millions of workers around the world demonstrated on May 1<sup>st</sup> against the neo-liberal onslaught of capitalism in decay.

### **Asia-Pacific**

**Aotearoa.** 5,000 workers, predominantly textile workers, took to the streets in cities and towns around the country in protest at the Government decision to end tariffs on clothing and footwear. Resolutions were passed at rallies in support of the Australian Maritime Union. **Australia.** 1,000 marched in Rockhampton on May 1; the focus on the Maritime Workers dispute.

In Sydney on May 4, as the last of the more than 10,000 Labour Day marchers poured into Albert Park, Maritime Union national organiser Jim Tannock announced the MUA's High Court victory from the stage. The battle cry of the dispute, "The workers united will never be defeated!", rang around the park.

In Melbourne more than 100,000 people rallied against the Howard government's Workplace Relations Act and attack on the maritime workers on May 6.

**Philippines.** In Manila, at least 35,000 workers of Kilusang Mayo Uno (May First Movement) assembled in three groups then marched and converged at the Liwasang Bonifacio to the hymn of the *Internationale*. Tens of thousands more marched in various regions throughout the country. A hundred red KMU banners were raised, symbolizing the centennial of the Filipino struggle against US imperialism. Protest streamers and local banners were also unfurled. They warmly welcomed Luis Jalandoni, representative of the National Democratic Front. Ka Roger Rosal, spokesperson of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), sent a voice tape addressing the national situation and the tasks of the working-class. Rosal enjoined the workers to take part in the revolution.

**Japan.** Kyodo news service estimated two million people attended rallies at more than 1,000 locations in the biggest turnout on May Day for years. The rallies denounced Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto's handling of the economy and demanded measures to end record high unemployment and tax cuts to improve people's standard of living. Japan's understated 'official' unemployment rose to 3.9 percent in March, the highest level since present statistics started in 1953. The rallies also protested against planned changes in labour legislation like allowing possibly longer work hours, which the government says is needed to make Japanese business more efficient and competitive. The biggest rally of 100,000 people was staged in central Tokyo by the country's main umbrella union group, the Japanese Trade Union Confederation (Rengo).

**South Korea.** In the capital, Seoul, riot police fired tear gas to disperse 20,000 workers and students protesting against job losses. "No to lay-offs!", South Korean workers chanted amidst the yellow haze of tear gas that filled a central section of the city. Around 40 protesters and police were injured, and 17 demonstrators were detained. The Korean Confederation of Trade Unions called for a general strike later this month or in early June to oppose massive lay-offs and other attacks on jobs.

**Taiwan.** 15,000 people braved pouring rain to march in Taipei for more protection for workers and students in the face of rapid privatisation and deregulation. This was Taiwan's largest and most well organised May Day rally in many years, bringing workers together with students protesting against university fee increases, indigenous people demanding jobs and other groups demanding Taiwanese independence and environmental protection.**Indonesia.** Violence escalated as police and students, including for the first time school children, fought running battles. Indonesian students in the north Sumatran city of Medan, enraged by an economic crisis that has caused spiraling inflation and widespread job losses, threw gasoline bombs at police and called for President Suharto to resign.

**Thailand.** 10,000 people marched in Bangkok with job security as their main demand. Some wore red hats or bandannas declaring "People unite and resist the IMF threat". The marchers also demanded the enactment of a new unemployment insurance law, a minimum wage (reviewable every six months) and a waiver on income tax on compensation.**Malaysia.** A rally of more than 1000 people demanded more protection against lay-offs.

**Cambodia.** More than 3000 workers marched in Phnom Penh to protest against poor factory conditions and demand wage increases and paid holidays.**India.** In Hyderabad, the capital of Andhra Pradesh, hundreds of thousands of peasants, agricultural labourers, tribal people and industrial workers from all regions of India demonstrated on May 2 against the World Trade Organisation and neo-liberal policies, and to demand the immediate withdrawal of India from the WTO.

**Tamil Eelam.** Rallies of thousands of people were held in the areas held by Liberation Tigers, including Mullaitivu and the Mannar District, and in Pooneryn, Mulangavil and Akkarayan Kulam.

## ★ May Day 1998

### Middle East / Africa

**Turkey.** 3000 riot police, backed by armoured cars, used water cannons and truncheons to block and disperse 5000 leftists from joining an official rally of 70,000 people at Freedom Monument in Istanbul's Sisli district. 46 demonstrators were injured and 200 activists arrested. Right-wing militants, watched by police, beat and then stabbed to death one left-wing protester.**Kurdistan.** In the Turkish-occupied city of Diyarbakir 1000 protesters defied emergency rule to hold a sit-down protest.

**Iraq.** Marchers burned US flags outside the central Baghdad headquarters of the UN Development Program and chanted, "The [UN Special Commission] inspectors are American spies".**Zimbabwe.** 15,000 rallied at Mutare's Sakubva stadium to support union demands for the scrapping of the 5% development levy, pension taxes and a 2.5% increase in sales tax.**Mozambique.** Thousands paraded through the capital Maputo, protesting against low wages and mass redundancies they blamed on the government's privatisation programme.

**Nigeria.** Opponents of military ruler Sani Abacha called for nationwide protests on after seeing this year's promised return to democracy headed for a one-candidate election expected to transform him into a civilian president. On May Day the main protests were in the southwestern city of Ibadan, an opposition stronghold where rioters tried to burn the offices of a pro-Abacha newspaper and other building owned by Abacha supporters. Witnesses said police opened fire in at least two places and seven bodies were taken to hospitals.



### Europe

**France.** 16,000 trade unionists marched through Paris demanding a 35-hour working week. A counter demonstration of 11,000 far right National Front supporters rallied in Paris against unemployment.

**England.** In London 4,000 made its way through central London to Clerkenwell to a rally held outside Marx House, a historic landmark for the Left, from where Lenin once edited "Iskra". In a broad celebration of International Solidarity the march was dominated by political activists from the Turkish and Kurdish communities. The rally was addressed by Jimmy Knapp, General Secretary of the RMT rail union and also heard from the Secretary of the Paris section of the CGT Earlier 500 railworkers rallied to call on the Government to re-nationalise the railway. In Brixton, council workers rallied on the steps of Lambeth Town Hall before marching through the town centre.

**Spain.** In Madrid 10,000 demonstrators wheeled a giant model of a euro coin (Europe's single currency, to be introduced next January) while people lay in its path as if they were being trampled. 40,000 marched in Barcelona.

**Portugal.** 30,000 marched in Lisborn demanding a 35 hour week and support for the former Portuguese colony of East Timor.

**Germany.** In Berlin 3,000 people from 26 nationalities, mainly Kurds, Turks and Germans, demonstrated under the banners 'Fight Internationally Against Exploitation and Oppression!' and 'No Liberation Without Revolution!' Another 4,000, mostly youth, marched in the evening from the Rosa Luxemburg Platz in East Berlin under the banner 'Enough is Enough!' before being broken up violently by police, with 300 to 400 arrests. Berlin Interior Minister Schonbohm called for May Day marches to be banned. In Leipzig police turned water cannons on left-wing activists demonstrating against a 4000 –strong neo-Nazi rally.

**Sweden,** an anarchist demonstration in Malmo was attacked by riot police, who arrested 137 activists. Banners at the demonstration read, "Against the European Fort and Schengen Treaty" and "Against the Police, Protectors of the Rich". **Denmark.** 135,000 rallied in Copenhagen on the fifth day of a half million strong nation-wide general strike demanding a week's extra holidays and a 35 hour working week. Support for the strike, which has effectively closed down the country. In an opinion poll published on May Day, more than 50% of the population declared their support for the strike

**Finland.** Up to 1000 people under anarchist and communist banners marched on May Day with banners such as "For humanity, against social democratics!".

**Switzerland:** Hundreds of radical youth, many wearing masks, marched through downtown Zurich, burned imperialist flags and targeted offices of monopoly capitalist corporations. Street fighting broke out as police used tear gas and water cannons against the May First protesters at burning street barricades

**Russia.** Police estimated 30,000 turned out to the May Day march in Moscow. Many marchers carried portraits of Stalin or banners attacking President Boris Yeltsin's government.

**Poland.** Leftist May Day marchers exchanged insults and missiles with right-wing hecklers in several cities.

**Bulgaria.** Up to 10,000 mostly elderly protesters with red flags marched in Sofia. "We think that one year for this (centre-right) cabinet has been enough. Bulgaria now needs new policy and new government," Socialist Party leader Georgi Parvanov told the rally. "Forty percent of the Bulgarians live in poverty, incomes are falling while prices are going up, national assets are being sold and the cabinet doesn't want and can't deal with rising crime and corruption," he added.

 **May Day 1998**

## The Americas

**Mexico.** May Day in Mexico City was marked by three mass demonstrations. 250,000 workers turned out for official, pro government rally, organised by the Congress of Labour (CT), in the Zocalo plaza.

(Participants are threatened with loss of a day's pay if they don't attend). A *second demonstration*, called by the National Workers Union, a breakaway from the CT, immediately followed the official CT rally. This drew 75,000 workers in well-organised contingents, including some from independent peasant confederations, featuring slogans rejecting neo-liberalism and calling for a new economic policy, salary increases, an end to corporatist labour practices, trade union democratisation, and opposition to privatisation of the national health system. A *third demonstration*, called by the radical left May 1<sup>st</sup> Inter-union Coordinating Committee (the Intersindical), and including the Zapatista National Liberation Front, brought a further 75,000 people from many sectors to the Zocalo. This featured many of the same demands as the UNT, but also demanded cancellation of Mexico's foreign debt, a new constituent assembly and constitution, freedom for political prisoners and an end to government

intervention in Chiapas. **Cuba.** Well over 1 million people marched through the Plaza de la Revolucion, chanting for the lifting of the US economic embargo against Cuba. **Canada.** In Ontario, all the major workplaces in industrial St. Catherine were shutdown in a general strike against the Tory government. A province-wide strike is planned for October.

**USA.** A crowd of nearly 2,000 attended ceremonies at Martyrs Monument in Chicago's Waldheim Cemetery commemorating May 1, 1886 when workers across the nation downed tools in support of the eight-hour day. In New York Several hundred participants applauded as speakers blasted Corporate America's attack on working people and called for a united struggle for public works jobs; an end to sweatshops and the privatization of social services; and the call to defend Social Security, public education and health care. The loudest applause came when Eddie Davis, coordinator of the N.Y. Coalition for Public Works Jobs, announced that Mayor Rudolph Giuliani had been forced to back down on plans to lay off hundreds of hospital workers.

**Honduras.** 20,000 workers marched to protest neo-liberal policies in place since 1990 and especially the new economic measures announced on Apr. 28 by President Carlos Flores to increase sales taxes and a lowering of business taxes.

**El Salvador.** The Coordinating Committee for Worker Unity and the Salvadoran Autonomous Workers Central mounted the largest May Day march since the signing of the peace accords in 1992 that ended a 12 year civil war. All 27 deputies from the leftist Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation (FMLN) participated in the march. The main slogan was: "United to Struggle for the Defeat of Neoliberalism."

**Nicaragua.** Some 5,000 marchers in Managua, including doctors who have been on strike for 2 months, demanded employment and fair salaries; 70% of the population is now living in poverty, according to government figures.

**Guatemala.** 15,000 marchers protested the government's economic policies and demanded clarification of the circumstances of the Apr. 27 murder of human rights advocate Bishop Juan Gerardi. Gerardi's murder took place just two days after he formally presented the results of an investigation into 55,021 human rights abuses committed during Guatemala's 36-year counter-insurgency war, which left over a million victims.

**Venezuela.** 100,000 marched demanding a reform of the social security system and the creation of more jobs in the face of 14% unemployment.

**Chile.** 4,500 workers marched in Santiago. Central Union of Workers president Roberto Alarcon noted that Chile and Brazil are the two Latin American countries with the most inequitable income distribution, and declared "the beginning of a new stage in the union struggle."

**Trinidad & Tobago.** Trade unionists braved a tropical downpour to march through Port of Spain to celebrate May Day. Over 400 workers from about six unions marched behind a banner proclaiming "Workers of the World Unite" and chanting slogans supporting workers in their sixth week of strike action at the University of the West Indies. In addition to supporting a national minimum wage, the marchers called for an end to contracting out and opposition to globalisation. The House of Representatives was forced to suspend its sitting while the noisy demonstration passed.

*Reports from Red Flag correspondents, Reuters, Weekly News Update from the Americas, Labour Start, Revolutionary Worker, Green Left Weekly, Peoples Weekly World*

## 150 YEARS OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNISM

"A spectre is haunting Europe - the spectre of Communism."

Since Marx and Engels penned these opening words to *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* in February 1848, the capitalist classes of Europe and the world, have indeed been haunted by the fear of the overthrow of their rule by the vast international proletariat.

The *Manifesto* pointed out how society had long been divided into conflicting classes; slave-owner and slave, feudal lord and peasant, capitalist and worker. It called on the workers to rid themselves of the conditions which divided society into a classes and oppressed them, to seize the means of production from the capitalists, to use themselves.

As the *Manifesto* was published revolution was breaking out in France and across Europe. Marx and Engels worked with revolutionary activists of the Communist League to try to mobilise the working class to take the lead in these insurrections.

The *Manifesto* outlined a scientific approach to communism. It condemned the popular amateurish, romantic 'socialist' visions and political intrigues of middle class or aristocratic malcontents and charted the way forward for the working class itself to fulfill its class interests and seize state power.

The forces of the Communist League were too small however. The June 1848 workers' uprising in Paris ultimately failed, the revolutionary impulse co-opted by the capitalist class. But Marx and Engels continued to analyse and organise the working class of Europe.

In 1864 they led the formation of the First International, the International Workingmen's Association. In 1871, the workers of Paris rose up and established the Paris Commune. This was short-lived but it demonstrated that the proletariat could seize power from the bourgeoisie and served as the prototype of the class dictatorship of the proletariat.

In the wake of the defeat of the Paris Commune, once more it looked as if the cause of proletarian revolution would come to naught. The First International was allowed to fade away in 1872. But Marx and Engels and their communist followers in the working class persevered in their revolutionary work.

## **Imperialism**

By the time that the Second International was founded through the International Socialist Workers' Party in Paris in 1889, the Marxist parties under the inspiration and guidance of the Communist Manifesto were dominant. But as the freely competitive capitalism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century developed into monopoly capitalism, the workers parties became co-opted by the seductive power of the capitalist class of their respective nations, revising and diluting the revolutionary theory and practice of the workers' movement. Ultimately the huge workers parties of Europe, supported the capitalists of their respective countries in the inter-imperialist slaughter of the working class in World War I.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Lenin inherited, extended and further developed Marxism, combating the revisionism, social chauvinism and social pacifism of the social-democratic parties in the Second International. Adhering to the revolutionary essence of Marxism, outlined in the Communist Manifesto and learning lessons from the Paris Commune, the Bolsheviks under the leadership of Lenin were able to use the dire conditions of the first inter-imperialist war to bring about the Great October Socialist Revolution and establish the first socialist state.

In the spirit of proletarian internationalism, Lenin proceeded to establish the Third International in 1919. This broadcast the Communist Manifesto and the anti-imperialist line in both the imperialist countries and the dominated countries, the colonies and semi-colonies.

The Bolsheviks defeated the imperialists and all local class enemies in the civil war and the interventionist war and surmounted economic blockade, military encirclement and all kinds of provocations in order to build the Soviet Union.

Stalin pursued the line of socialist revolution and construction. Under his leadership, the Soviet state and people created a powerful industrial foundation and a collectivized and mechanized agriculture. The educational and cultural system was expanded and it produced within a short period of time the largest contingent of professionals and technicians for socialist construction.

The Soviet Union thrived with a population which was one-sixth of the world's while the imperialists were stricken with the Great Depression and were driven by their contradictions to the second inter-imperialist war. The Soviet proletariat and people overcame the Nazi German aggression at great cost and proceeded to lead the great counterattack against the fascist forces of monopoly capitalism.

In the course of the second inter-imperialist war, communists in so many countries in the world excelled in fighting and defeating the forces of fascism and laid the basis of people's democracies and socialist states. Thus, before the centenary of the Communist Manifesto, communist and workers' parties were in the process of coming to power and consolidating it in several countries. More than one-third of the world's population would be free from the imperialists and the local reactionaries.

## Imperialist Offensive and Crisis

Following the war in 1948 the imperialists desperately declared of the Cold War against the rising combination of socialist countries and national liberation movements. The peak of communist strength was reached on the basis of the great unity of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China.

Despite the great advances of the working class from the time of the October Revolution, because the process was unprecedented, many great errors were made that, like the 1848 and 1871 revolutions before them, would ultimately lead to renewed defeat. The greatest of these was to allow the emergence of new revisionist forces within the workers' organisations; bureaucratic and corrupt leaders promoting their own interests ahead of the masses.

The revisionists consolidated as a new capitalist class when the Khrushchov revisionist clique overthrew the proletariat in the Soviet Union in 1956. So did the revisionist cliques in Eastern Europe. For a certain period Mao and Hoxha stood up together for Marxism-Leninism and combated modern revisionism.

With China's one-quarter of humanity, Mao pursued the line of socialist revolution and construction, striving to avoid the pitfalls of Soviet development and surpass its achievements. From 1966 to 1976, he put forward the theory and practice of continuing revolution by combating revisionism, preventing the restoration of capitalism and consolidating socialism under the dictatorship of the proletariat through the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

In 1975, US imperialism was categorically defeated in its war of aggression against the Vietnamese and other Indochinese peoples. For the United States, defeat in this war was far worse than that in the Korean war, which had ended in a stalemate. The US was stricken by a deepening economic crisis which signaled a strategic decline.

But in the latter half of the `70s, the line of Mao was reversed in China. Soviet bureaucrat monopoly capitalism went into stagnation. And the imperialist alliance headed by the United States had succeeded in entrapping most countries in the third world in the web of neocolonialism. In the entire `80s, the dogma of free trade was anachronistically touted by monopoly capitalism. The restoration of capitalism was speeded up in all the revisionist-ruled countries, including the Soviet Union and China, under the slogan of reforms. From 1989 to 1991, the revisionist rulers were toppled, public assets were brazenly privatized and social turmoil occurred in the former Soviet- bloc countries. The Soviet Union itself disintegrated.

Yet as Marx and Engels pointed out so clearly in the Manifesto 150 years ago the monopoly bourgeoisie and all its camp followers cannot escape the worsening crisis of their own system. The retrogression of monopoly capitalism to the most naked forms of oppression and exploitation, using the antiquated slogans of liberalism and "free market" has led to an unprecedentedly grave new world disorder.

The revolutionary movement of the proletariat and the people against imperialism and for socialism is beginning to surge forward once again. Communists are preparing for greater battles and greater victories ahead.

*Adapted from 'Reaffirm The Communist Manifesto', Address to the New Communist Party of the Netherlands, Jose Maria Sison, May 1, 1998*

# PHILIPPINES REBELS RECOVER TERRITORY

*Jaime Espina*

SOMEWHERE IN NEGROS ----- In a New People's Army (NPA) encampment by the bank of a swiftly rushing mountain stream deep in a Negros forest, more than two hundred farmers, many from villages as far as a day's walk away, gathered to witness ceremonies marking the end of a week-long politico-military training course for fulltime guerrillas and young mass supporters who had volunteered or been recruited for local militias or to become fulltime revolutionary workers.

But more than just a graduation, the ceremonies marked the poignant beginnings of reconciliation between the rebels and their former comrades and mass supporters in this area, newly recovered four years after a disastrous split hit the ranks of the Negros revolutionary movement.

Once a formidable stronghold, the territory had turned into a virtual no-man's-land in the early 1990s when whole villages fled or were forcibly driven from their homes by the intense operations launched by government in retaliation for the increasingly bolder and bigger NPA assaults on military and government targets and assassinations in the urban centers.

The masa, including officers of local underground political organs, crowded into filthy evacuation centers where many of them helplessly watched their children die of hunger or the epidemics that regularly swept their ranks.

But even before the area became deserted, the NPA had already become relatively isolated from the crucial mass base - both its main source of support and manpower and the "ocean" in which they swam - because of the murderous Oplan Linis, the 1988 purge of suspected government agents that was the local version of Mindanao's Kampanyang Aho and Southern Tagalog's Oplan Missing Link.

Negros rebel cadres today admit that "more than hundreds" of their comrades and mass supporters were slain during Linis, many of them, as it turned out, without sufficient basis or due process.

"The movement became as much a threat to the masses as the military," Ka Eking, a regional cadre of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP- NPA) admits.

A woman who had noticeably come alone to witness the rebels's graduation said she lost three members of her family during the purge. But, she said, "the kaupod before never explained to me why they were killed." Naturally, many of the victims's kin turned against the movement. Many joined the Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Units (Cafgu), others the many religious fanatic cults used by the military in the counterinsurgency campaign. These former supporters became among the fiercest hunters of the NPA. And, in their thirst for vengeance, they also turned, often extremely cruelly, against their fellow masa.

The increasing loss of their mass base, however, did not faze a movement that had turned arrogant because of the seemingly spectacular successes of their offensives. Instead of trying to win back the lost support, the rebels automatically tagged Cafgus and fanatics as among their enemies.

If the militiamen and fanatics were cruel, the rebels were just as cruel in the retaliatory raids they launched against the villages of their new foes. Massacres were not unknown. Livestock and crops were looted in the guise of "confiscation." The vicious cycle continued for years as the rebels grew more and more isolated from the masses. Apparently obsessed with fighting, they had abandoned one of their most crucial tasks, organizing the hinterland peasants.

Recalling that period to the gathered rebels and mass supporters, Ka Tagoy (names of persons have been changed to protect them), who, with his wife, used to belong to a local Party section committee tasked with overseeing an area equivalent to a small town, said: "We were all victims of the damage caused by the movement's wrong line of conducting the people's war. Many lives were lost. Many of the masa remain missing to this day. Many were wrongfully killed. Because of fear and suspicion, some of the masa took to telling on each other and on the kaupod. We were divided. The time came when the mountains were no longer populated because we had all fled."

Tagoy and his family were among the thousands who joined the exodus in 1991.

In 1993, the regional leadership of the movement in Negros declared their autonomy from the leadership of the CPP, taking with them the bulk of the NPA, which, at its peak, commanded four companies in four guerrilla fronts on the island. According to Ka Eking, the split left the movement with only one NPA platoon and "much less" than 25 percent of the Party's membership.

But the worst effect was the loss of the movement's mass base which, by the time of the split, had dwindled to less than 10 percent the hundreds of thousands of supporters in the mid-1980s.

Realizing they could never recover without the masses's support, NPA units carefully avoided engaging government troops, concentrating instead on organizing work. From mere fighting units, they slowly became adept at providing health care, educating peasant children and illiterate farmers and working alongside the masa in their farms, both to help increase production and achieve self-sufficiency.

Slowly, NPA squads began fanning out from the few villages left under their influence in 1993. At first, recovery was slow, often measured in households.

Ka Rommel, political officer of the unit in this territory, said that when they first started out from their original base, "we would knock on houses in the dead of night asking for water but the owners would not even open their windows to talk to us." One guerrilla unit had to go hungry for days in the vicinity of one village until one farmer finally deigned to offer them food.

But they persisted. Ka Rommel said that, in areas that had been badly hit by the movement's mistakes, "we often had to risk our lives to prove to the masses that we were sincere. If they had wanted to take revenge on us, they would have. But apparently, we convinced them that we were no longer the movement they knew and feared before."

Among their most convincing approaches, he said, "was to confess our faults before the people and vow never to repeat them again. And we would match our words with actions, helping them in their everyday tasks. Soon, they began to call us the `origs,' saying we reminded them of the NPA before the time of the errors."

Their persistence, said Ka Rommel, "allowed us to win back even those areas where fanatics and Caguis remained strong. Although some have still refused to rejoin us, we have effectively neutralized them with the help of the recovered masa."

When Ka Tagoy and his family finally returned to his home, long before the "rectified" NPA reached the area, he found the remaining kaupod sporting a new name - the Revolutionary Proletarian Army (RPA).

The breakway rebel group, he said, "maintained all the worst qualities of the NPA at the time of the serious errors and abuses. They would enter villages even in broad daylight despite appeals from residents not to do so because of the dangers they were exposed to. In one sitio, even when teachers were around, they came and, when complaints were raised before them, merely replied: `When the enemy comes, just drop to the ground.'"

Aside from this, he said, the rogue guerrillas would spend the nights in farmers's homes, oblivious to the dangers they were exposing their reluctant hosts to.

Tagoy and his wife vowed "never to return to the revolution again."

Ka Ben headed a section committee for seven years before quitting the movement "because, the way I analyzed the situation, I came to the conclusion that the kaupod and the masa would only die uselessly the way the revolution was going, without a clear direction."

"Our committee had formed alliances with or neutralized many barrio officials and sugarcane planters in our area," Ben recalled. "But how could we maintain our relationships with these people, who we had convinced to support the movement, when the kaupod would send units to visit them, asking for help, even in broad daylight. They never considered that they were exposing these people and placing them at risk. As a result, we lost their support."

Linis was the last straw for Ben. "Even without sufficient data, the kaupod would kill people," he recalled near tears, and confessed that "I myself was also ordered to kill - and I did - without even understanding why."

But, Ben added, "it was not just the movement's fault. The masa too were to blame. We failed to observe the policy of openly admonishing the comrades if they did wrong. We failed to rise above our corrupt culture and took to accusing each other. Many of us would react when the kaupod would try to correct our mistakes and would surrender to the enemy and help guide them in their operations."

A sitio official today, he said "I returned to the mountains because I never lost my commitment to continue helping the people and those who continue to wage revolution." But he quickly realized that his return was like a trip to the nightmarish past.

When the RPA set up a legal organization in his village, he said, "I did not want anything to do with it but the people elected me anyway." Soon, however, "I was at the office of the organization telling them I was disaffiliating because the RPA had ignored an agreement not to enter the village openly."

When Ka Rommel's NPA unit finally reached the area, among the first houses they tried to visit was Tagoy's. But when they called out to him the first night they went there, Tagoy and his wife, terrified, refused to face them, pleading with them to leave them in peace because they had committed no crimes against the revolution.

It took some time before the rebel unit convinced Tagoy they came not to exact retribution but to reconcile with the masa and rebuild the revolution.

As they did in other areas recovered by the NPA, the local RPA unit became scarce, avoiding the new arrivals in a touchy sort of co-existence. Many of the farmers at the ceremonies acknowledged that because of this, they no longer are bothered much by the renegade guerrillas.

Despite this, however, Ka Dencio, also a former section committee member, said that "people continue to fear the situation because of the two groups operating here. They are afraid of being tagged by both the military and the RPA," which has been known to order the execution of those considered "traitors."

The fear aside, Dencio acknowledges that "the bulk of the masa have come to understand the differences in the wrong line of the past, which the RPA continues to follow, and the correct line of the kaupod. The stand of the people is definitely for the recitification."

According to Tagoy, who is also a pastor, rejoining the revolution was not an easy decision. But as he told his audience, drawing a religious allusion, "good seed will grow wherever you sow it and it was clear to me that here, with the arrival of the kaupod and the rectification they brought, was the good seed."

"Now that the revolution has returned to us and the movement is strong again, let us ask ourselves, 'Will we join or not?' We may say no out of fear and misgiving. But the tide to time, the worsening crises we are facing, gives us no choice. Our lands are being grabbed, the mines will come, our rivers will die; we have no choice but to join our revolution. Our efforts alone to defend ourselves will not be enough. We need the armed struggle. In the revolution lies our future and our children's future," he said.

Dencio, however, also stressed that "armed struggle alone will not suffice. It is still we, the masses, who bear the responsibility of advancing the cause. After all, this is a people's war."

Still, the reconciled former comrades and supporters made it clear to the NPA that their support was conditional.

As Ka Ben put it: "If the movement wishes to help the people, do not repeat the mistakes of the past. I and the other officials in our sitio assure you we will not hamper the rectification movement. We will help you."

But he also reminded the masa that their relations with the NPA was a two-way street. "The rectification cannot prosper if the masses themselves do not rectify as well. Let us all deepen our commitment, give our all." Tagoy added: "Let us protect the kaupod. The enemy will come here only if we tell them where the comrades are. But if we protect them, if we unit, the kaupod may stay in this place for 20 years more and the enemy would never know."

*Panay News* March 21, 1998

## **Celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the NDF**

Communist Party of Aotearoa

April 24, 1998

For 25 crucial years the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) has proved itself the indubitable core of the revolutionary united front for national democratic revolution in the Philippines and a shining light in the international united front against imperialism.

The militants of the 1970 First Quarter storm, forced underground by Marcos' declaration of martial law, who Under the leadership of the Communist Party of the Philippines created the NDF in 1973, forged deep roots among wide sectors of the people. Revolutionary organisations of the NDF such KM, Makibaka, Christians for National Revolution, Cordillera People's Democratic Front and others organised impressive sectoral organisations on both legal and underground levels.

On the basis of the worker-peasant alliance consolidated by the CPP and its armed wing, the NPA, the NDF worked tirelessly to win over allies from other classes to the side of national democratic revolution. Working among the wide range of democratic forces suppressed by the Marcos regime, the NDF recruited many thousands of urban petty bourgeois activists and a smattering of national bourgeois to the revolutionary forces.

The NDF skillfully exploited divisions among the reactionary classes of the Philippines, even amongst the armed forces of the US-backed bureaucrat capitalist regime, proving the Maoist tactic of 'uniting the many to defeat the few'.

Internationally, the NDFP has been a leading light in the international united front against imperialism, particularly US imperialism. From 1973 when it was standing in arms against the US aggressor alongside our comrades in the national liberation movements in Indochina to the anti-nuclear struggle in the Pacific that saw the US bases kicked out of the Philippines to the current worldwide struggle against imperialist globalisation, the NDFP has been at its heart.

Such are the tasks of a revolutionary united front. The Communist Party of Aotearoa salutes the impressive work of the NDFP in putting the theory of the united front into revolutionary practice in difficult conditions over these 25 years. In the long association of the Communist Party here with the various organisations of the NDFP we have learned immense lessons for our own struggle at home, for which we are deeply appreciative. We have strived to do all we can to make our own contributions to the strategically important revolution in the Philippines. We have struggled hand in hand alongside the NDFP in the international anti-imperialist struggle, particularly in the struggle for a Nuclear Free Pacific, and in the spirit of proletarian internationalism.

We have also learnt from the mistakes of our comrades of the NDFP. In the 1980s when the international communist movement was deeply confused by imperialist resurgence and right opportunism, the NDF made severe errors.

Confused notions of the united front, derived from Nicaragua and El Salvador, which reduced the leading role of the Communist Party to that of an affiliate under the guise of building alliances with the national bourgeoisie, contributed to the right opportunist trend internationally. In Aotearoa rightists in the Communist Party parroted this line to promote liquidationism, trading on the respect for the NDF and the sacrifices of the Filipino people. Many years were lost from the revolution in Aotearoa because of a resulting over-emphasis on alliances with the middle class and an underemphasis on organising the basic masses on which any useful alliance must be based. Of course these were our own errors, stemming from our own weaknesses, but the lesson is that the impact of errors of revolutionary strategy are not confined to national borders.

The struggle of the NDFP to recover from these errors, the isolation from the masses in the 1980s and the mishandling of the united front when the US dumped Marcos in favour of Aquino, was the source of many lessons for us as well. The importance of summing up experience, criticism and self criticism, distinguishing left and right errors without degenerating into sectarianism or liberalism, and trusting the masses have been proven in the second rectification campaign. The CPP and NDFP have again provided a great fountain of practical experience in the correct handling of contradictions within the party and the mass movements that is of immense value to the international communist movement.

Long Live the Revolutionary United Front!

Long Live the National Democratic Front of the Philippines!

Victory to the Philippines National Democratic Revolution!

## **PEOPLE'S WAR RAGES IN PERU**

News reports over the past seven months show that the People's War in Peru is being carried forward in important parts of the countryside as well as in the cities. Various press reports, in Peru and elsewhere, describe how the revolution--led by the Communist Party of Peru (PCP)--is continuing to organise peasants, urban poor and others to join and support the People's War. This is happening in the face of

the U.S.-backed Fujimori regime's vicious counter-revolutionary tactics, such as the extension of "emergency rule" & the formation of a special police unit to target PCP leaders.

Even though mainstream press articles are often based on Peruvian military and police reports that try to paint a favourable picture for the government, they often cannot hide aspects of the real situation. For example, numerous articles over the past six months report continuing clashes between the PCP's People's Liberation Army and the government's military and paramilitary forces. Regions where the most intense combat has been reported are the Huallaga River Valley (in what Peruvians call the northern "eyebrow of the jungle"); the Central Mountains, including the departments of Ayacucho, Huancavelica and Apurímac; and the Satipo and Ene River Valley of Junin department where large numbers of Asháninka Indians have joined the People's War.

These three regions are places where the PCP (usually called the 'Shining Path' or 'Sendero Luminoso' in the press) has been known to have organised revolutionary base areas--communities where peasants, workers, and their allies wield a new people's political power won through the People's War.

### **Recent Armed Actions in the Countryside**

Peruvian counter-insurgency chiefs are voicing heightened concerns about the "resurgence" of the war.

A *Reuters* wire service article dated October 12, 1997 said, "Shining Path Returns," reporting that a column of 100 Maoist guerrillas temporarily took over the city of San Miguel, the capital of La Mar province in the Department of Ayacucho. According to Reuters, "The bold attack was one in a series of operations nationwide that have shocked the country.... It is compelling evidence that Shining Path...has reincorporated Ayacucho into a triangular power base after years of patient restructuring. The group now coordinates fighting units in Lima, the Central Highlands and the jungle of Ayacucho, and the drug-growing valley of Huallaga, according to analysts and security forces."

The article also described how a 50-man Peruvian Army unit went into the same town a week later, summoned the inhabitants and threatened them with "drastic measures." According to *Reuters*, Army Commander Luis Rojas "pounded his fist on a makeshift lectern" and said, "There are many people here who participated in this event [the takeover by the guerrillas], there are many collaborators, you are going to tell us who they are."

Most Lima dailies reported on October 18 that three police officials were killed and another wounded in an ambush by some 30 combatants of the People's War on the road between Tingo María and Pucallpa in the Huallaga River Valley.

An October 23 article in the Peruvian daily *Expreso* said that four soldiers were wounded in a clash with a column of the Maoist guerrillas in the Ayacucho jungle. According to the report, the government forces had been dispatched from the Pichari "anti-subversive military base." The same article reported that in another part of the country, a group of 15 revolutionary fighters had entered the town of Cochabamba in the Department of Ancash along the coast north of Lima.

The French-owned ELF oil company announced in October that it was suspending operations in the Ene River area until the government could give fuller guarantees of protection against PCP activities. In August a column of PCP guerrillas reportedly occupied an ELF oil exploration site. According to *Expreso* (August 18), the revolutionaries "lectured" the workers on the goals of the People's War and carried away supplies and radio equipment.

The Mexican news agency Notimex reported on November 17 that masked guerrillas "presumed to be Shining Path rebels" occupied a radio station in the city of Huancayo in Junin. The radio station later said that the group of fighters, led by a woman, played cassettes with "subversive slogans supporting the armed struggle" and then left.

On November 23 most Lima dailies reported that eight government soldiers and six guerrilla fighters were killed when a column of PCP-led fighters took over the town of Aucayacu in the Department of Huánuco, just south of the Huallaga River Valley.

According to a January 30, 1998 article in the Peruvian newspaper *La Republica*, PCP guerrilla fighters entered the city of Tingo María and killed a retired Army officer who had been a member of "Counter-Subversive Battalion No. 313."

According to an official communique from the "Political-Military Command of Ayacucho" (which represents the government under "emergency rule"), there was a clash between Army troops and PCP fighters in the region of Vizcatan, in the department of Ayacucho, in the early morning of March 12 (*El Comercio*, March 14, 1998): The government communique claimed that 10 guerrilla fighters were killed, while one government soldier was killed and six injured. But the report also said that "an Army helicopter was not able to land and rescue the [government's] injured because of the inhospitable and difficult access" and because the revolutionary forces "were firing continuously on the military aircraft."

On April 22, *La República* reported that a column of about 40 PCP fighters carried out two temporary takeovers of towns near Tingo María in the Huallaga River Valley within a week.

On May 2, *Reuters* reported an ambush by 50 PCP guerrillas of a Peruvian army patrol in the jungle-covered mountains of Ayacucho region, killing two soldiers and wounding six.

According to calculations by Carlos Tapia (known as one of the leading official "experts" on the People's War in Peru) there were some 500 armed actions by the PCP in the second half of 1997. The majority of these actions were in the department of Ayacucho, resulting in "150 deaths" for government forces. Tapia said the figures "demonstrate that the group is clearly in a process of reactivation." (*AFP*, January 2, 1998)

### **Armed Actions in Lima**

Armed actions attributed by the press to the PCP have also been reported in Lima, the capital city. Last year, two days before the May 17 anniversary of the launching of the People's War, the police station in the poor neighbourhood of Ate-Vitarte came under attack. According to various news reports there was a firefight, and then a car bomb exploded in front of the station and destroyed it. Leaflets headlined "Long Live the 17th Anniversary of the People's War!" and "Long Live the Street Vendors' Struggle!" were left behind.

On November 5, two offices of the Peru Telephone Company (owned by a Spanish transnational corporation) were simultaneously attacked with explosives during the night time hours. And on December 28 a car bomb reportedly exploded near the offices of the privately owned electrical company Luz del Sur (*El Comercio*, 12/29/97).

### **Government Counterinsurgency**

The Fujimori regime is making renewed efforts to organise Army-led paramilitary forces called rondas-- especially in parts of Ayacucho department and in the Satipo and Ene River Valley. The ronderos (as the members of these squads are called) are usually led and organised directly by the Peruvian military. In cases where the ronda leaders are said to be "civilians," they are often retired military and police or local pro-government lackeys. Sometimes the government refers to these rondas as "self-defense committees." What they are defending is the government and their whole repressive apparatus.

*El Comercio* reported on November 12 that the rondas in the jungle province of Satipo are using Asháninka Indians as guides and frontline cannon fodder against other Asháninkas who are organised and fighting on the side of the People's War.

The same newspaper reported on November 20 that "in the face of a resurgence" of the People's War, "some 2,500 ronderos of Ayacucho received an allotment of arms and cases of munitions from the high military command." A house was built to house and assist members of these rondas at the Peruvian military base in the city of Ayacucho. According to the report "the weapons were blessed by Monseñor Juan Luis Cipriani, Archbishop of Ayacucho."

Another aspect of the government's counter-insurgency, reported on November 27, was the extension of the "state of emergency" in nine regions of the country--including Lima, Callao, Ayacucho, Huancavelica, Cusco (in the South), Junin (where the Satipo River Valley is located), Pasco (the principal mining region), Huánuco, and San Martín and Loreto in the Northeast Amazonian region.

Meanwhile, the Fujimori regime created a new special police unit to capture PCP leaders. *La República* (Nov. 7) reported: "In an effort to destroy the nucleus of Sendero leadership, which has maintained the armed struggle five years after the capture of Abimael Guzmán, the government has authorized the formation of a special command of the anti-terrorist police, similar to the one that captured 'Presidente Gonzalo'... The objective is to stop Oscar Ramírez Durand, 'Comrade Feliciano'--the man that intelligence services say has been able to reorganise Sendero... The Army in particular has failed numerous times in operations to capture Feliciano in the deep forest of the Apurímac Valley, in the heights of Razhuilca, and in the mountains of the Ene River Valley."

In September, the Fujimori regime tried to clean up its image by announcing that the system of "faceless" judges will be eliminated. Under this system, people accused of "terrorism" were railroaded to long prison terms by military judges wearing hoods to hide their identity. According to *La República* (10/2/97), the President of the Lima Superior Court noted that "it is positive for the country's image abroad that this system be ended."

However, civilians accused of "treason" will still be tried by non-hooded military judges. And others will still be tried in civilian courts by non-hooded judges for "apology for terrorism"--defined as saying or doing anything that can be construed as sympathetic towards the People's War.

And the end of trials by hooded judges will not change the status of the over 4,000 who are already imprisoned after being convicted by these outrageous secret tribunals. *El Comercio* reported on September 25 that the National Police arrested nine people and accused them of belonging to the "People's Intellectual Movement of the Huancavelica zone." These teachers were accused of trying to win over students to solidarity with the People's War. Among them was the Secretary General of the Huancavelica section of the national teachers union (SUTEP).

The hooded judges sent people to jail right up to the official October 30 suspension date. *El Comercio* reported on October 8 that "a Special Military Tribunal convicted six people" for "treason to the fatherland" while another received a life sentence. The president of the Women's Federation of the shantytown of Villa El Salvador (on the outskirts of Lima) was accused of "terrorism" for allegedly helping the PCP organize among people (*La República* Oct. 25).

Recently, the U.S. made a significant escalation in its support for the Fujimori regime. According to the April 21 *Washington Post*, 30 "specialized U.S. military instructors" were sent to Peru in March--to supplement a force of 35 U.S. troops already stationed on a permanent basis at an important U.S. radar base there. According to the *Post*, the 30 troops are made up of 15 Navy SEALs, nine Army Special Forces, four Marines and two Coast Guard officers. The official story is that they will train Peruvian troops in "drug interdiction." But the "war on drugs" has long been a cover for U.S. counter-insurgency in Latin America, especially in Peru. The U.S. "trainers" will instruct and deploy Peruvian forces in "riverine

operations" in the Huallaga River Valley and the Satipo/Ene River Valley--areas of fierce contention between the PCP and the Fujimori regime.

*Committee to Support the Revolution in Peru*

## **American Military Intervention Brewing in Colombia**

Amidst growing speculation of a possible intervention of American Armed forces in Colombia, to combat the rapidly growing insurgency, the chief of the Southern Command of the United States, General Charles E. Wilhem, arrived in Bogota on May 5. General Wilhem met Colombia's minister of Defence, Gilberto Echeverri and Police Director, General Rosso Jose Serrano, to discuss heavy casualties suffered by the Colombian Army at the hands of the guerrillas operating in Cajun.

U.S. officials are alarmed by the growing strength and boldness of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). A classified report by the Defense Intelligence Agency notes that the rebels have handed the Colombian military a series of defeats and warns that if the military continues to lose ground, the Colombian government may be forced within five years to make an unfavourable "accommodation" with the guerrillas. That could mean recognizing the FARC's control over the southern half of Colombia and effectively partitioning the country.

According to the *US News and World Report*, operating aggressively in units of 300 or more, the guerrillas now routinely sack police stations across the country. Three guerilla armies, FARC, linked to the Communist Party of Colombia, the Peoples Liberation Army (EPL), led by the PCC(Marxism-Leninist), and the Cuban-inspired National Liberation Army (ELN) united as the Simón Bolívar Guerilla Coordinating Committee (CGSB) in 1987. More than 20,000 combatants are organised in 120 fronts and guerilla columns. (Colombia's population is 33 million.)

In March this year, the Colombian military suffered its most humiliating defeat in years: An elite unit, Mobile Brigade 3, stumbled into a guerrilla stronghold and was practically wiped out. It took days for the Army to retrieve the corpses of 73 soldiers. Forty-six others are still held prisoner by the FARC. That debacle followed the rout of an Army communications base in December, and last year's spectacle of 60 soldiers held hostage until the Army withdrew from a huge swath of territory.

About 65 U.S. troops are helping to train the Colombian Army for 'counter-drug missions', but the Pentagon's assessment is bleak. "The performance of the Colombian military to date provides little cause for optimism that they will be able to reverse the erosion of government control," Gen. Charles Wilhelm, chief of the U.S. Southern Command, testified to Congress in March. Wilhelm also warned that the conflict was spilling over to Panama, Ecuador, and especially Venezuela--and could destabilize the entire region.

The Clinton administration is seeking to increase aid to the Colombian government's 'anti-narcotics effort' by \$ 21 million, to about \$100 million a year. Some Republicans in Congress also want to send three more UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters, at a cost of about \$50 million. The administration is constrained from increasing direct aid for the Colombian military is its record of human rights abuses and government corruption.

The commander of Colombia's armed forces, Gen. Manuel Jose Bonett, admits that its military is inadequate. "[But] our problem is not ineptitude; our problem is that we don't have more combat troops," he says. Only 33,000 troops are available for combat, since 22,000 are guarding key installations like an oil pipeline that guerrillas blew up 66 times last year. Oil is Colombia's top export, and guerrilla actions have forced British Petroleum to scale back operations.

# IN SUPPORT OF THE INDONESIAN PEOPLE'S STRUGGLE

Communist Party of Aotearoa

May 21, 1998

The Communist Party of Aotearoa and the workers and oppressed peoples of Aotearoa condemn the brutal suppression of the students, workers and peasants of Indonesia at the bloody hands of the Suharto/Habibie regime during the current crisis.

The ouster of Suharto under the weight of the mass protests of the Indonesian people is but a side-stepping personality shuffle among the corrupt Indonesian US-backed bureaucrat capitalist regime.

The new president, Habibie, was handpicked and installed as vice-president by Suharto. Real power remains with the Suharto family, his son-in-law General Wiranto, heading the armed forces.

Suharto/Habibie regime is being propped up by the US through the IMF's \$43 billion bail out of the economy, designed to wring the last drop of blood and sweat from the Indonesian people.

The 'sensitivity' of the regime to the demands of the people, under US tutelage, is just another example of the sham "democracy" through bourgeois managed elections staged at the flashpoints of rebellion in the third world to divert the people's energy towards "peaceful" and away from fundamental change.

But brutal repression remains an eye-blink away in the standoff between the people and the corrupt bureaucrat-military regime. The Suharto/Habibie regime is fundamentally repressive, brutal and utterly dependent on exploiting the blood and sweat of the Indonesian people. The regime is built on the corpses of more than half a million Indonesians massacred in 1965 and the hundreds of thousands of East Timorese and West Papuans who died in their struggle for self determination.

The brutal suppression of democratic rights in Indonesia has allowed the Suharto ruling clique and its imperialist masters to plunder the oil and other natural resources of Indonesia and exploit Indonesian cheap labor in mineral extraction, plantations and export-oriented sweatshops (where the wage rate is US\$ 2-3 per day).

We support all the Indonesian democratic forces and people for waging resistance against the Suharto/Habibie regime. The upsurge of their militant mass actions in the face of the brutality of the regime is deeply moving. We admire the youth for striving to realize their revolutionary potential in the service of the people, to work for peasant and worker unity under the leadership of the working class.

A broad legal democratic mass movement is necessary in order to arouse, organize and mobilize the broadest range of forces against the narrowest target, the fascist enemy. The broad masses of the people must shatter more than three decades of fascist terror. At the same time, the proletarian revolutionary party must grow in strength in the underground to serve as the core of the revolutionary mass movement.

The launching of a protracted people's war in several islands of Indonesia is necessary to move the struggle beyond the rotation of ruling cliques to the profound social change needed to lift the Indonesian masses from the mire of poverty and exploitation.

The dispersed islands of Indonesia provide a vast countryside in which the revolutionary forces can build their mass base, draw the forces of the enemy out thinly, and overcome them unit by unit.

The experience of the international communist movement demonstrates that the Indonesian people can achieve the new democratic revolution only through a protracted people's war and a broad united front of democratic forces under the leadership of the working class through the Communist Party of Indonesia.

The Communist Party of Aotearoa and the workers and oppressed peoples under our leadership stand by our comrades in Indonesia in the spirit of proletarian internationalism. Your struggle against fascism and US imperialism is also our struggle.

Unite to defeat the US-backed Suharto/Habibie military fascist regime!

Long live the Communist Party of Indonesia!